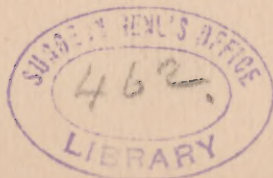




VERSES read on the presentation by
 S. WEIR MITCHELL to the Philadel-
 phia College of Physicians of
 SARAH W. WHITMAN'S portrait of
 OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, M.D.
 associate fellow.

April 30th 1892





W E call them great who have the magic art
To summon tears and stir the human heart,
With fictive grief to bring the soul annoy,
And leave a dew drop in the rose of joy.
A nobler purpose had the Masters wise
Who from your walls look down with kindly eyes.
Theirs the firm hand and theirs the ready brain
Strong for the battle with disease and pain.
Large were their lives: these scholars, gentle, brave,
Knew all of man from cradle unto grave.
What note of torment had they failed to hear?
All grief's stern gamut knew each pitying ear.

Nor theirs the useless sympathy that stands
Beside the suffering with defenceless hands ;
Divinely wise, their pity had the art
To teach the brain the ardor of the heart.
These left a meaner for a nobler George ;
These trod the red snows by the Valley Forge,
Saw the wild birth-throes of a Nation's life,
The long-drawn misery and the doubtful strife :
Yea, and on darker fields they left their dead
Where grass-grown streets heard but the bearer's tread,
While the sad death-roll of those fatal days
Left small reward beyond the poor man's praise.
Lo ! Shadowy greetings from each canvas come,
Lips seem to move now for a century dumb :
From tongues long hushed the sound of welcome falls,
" Place, place for Holmes upon these honoured walls."

The lights are out, the festal flowers fade,
Our guests are gone, the great hall wrapped in shade.
Lone in the midst this silent picture stands,
Ringed with the learning of a score of lands.
From dusty tomes in many a tongue I hear
A gentle Babel,—“Welcome, Brother dear.
Yea, though Apollo won thy larger hours,
And stole our fruit, and only left us flowers,
The poet's rank thy title here completes—
—Doctor and Poet,—so were Goldsmith,—Keats.”
The voices failing murmur to an end
With “Welcome Doctor, Scholar, Poet, Friend.”

In elder days of quiet wiser folks,
When the great Hub had not so many spokes,

Two wandering Gods, upon the Common, found
A weary school boy sleeping on the ground.
Swift to his brain their eager message went,
Swift to his heart each ardent claim was sent ;
“Be mine,” Minerva cried. “This tender hand
Skilled in the art of arts shall understand
With magic touch the demon pain to lay.
From skill to skill and on to clearer day
Far through the years shall fare that ample brain
To read the riddles of disease and pain.”
“Nay, mine the boy,” Apollo cried aloud,
“His the glad errand, beautiful and proud,
To wing the arrows of delightful mirth,
To slay with jests the sadder things of earth.
At his gay science melancholy dies,
At his clear laugh each morbid fancy flies.”

Rich is the quiver I shall give his bow,
The eagle's pinion some bold shafts shall know ;
Swift to its mark the angry Arrow-song,
Shall find the centre of a nation's wrong ;
Or in a people's heart one tingling shot
Pleads not in vain against the war ship's lot.
Yea, I will see that for a gentler flight
The dove's soft feathers send his darts aright
When smiles and pathos, kindly wedded, chant
The plaintive lay of that unmarried aunt ;
Or sails his Nautilus the sea of time,
Blown by the breezes of immortal rhyme,
Or with a Godspeed from her poet's brain,
Sweet Clémence trips a-down the Rue de Seine.
The humming bird shall plume the quivering song,
Blithe, gay and restless, never dull or long,

Where gaily passionate his soul is set
To sing the Katydid's supreme regret,
Or creaking jokes, through never-ending days,
Rolls the quaint story of the Deacon's chaise.
Away with tears; when this glad poet sings,
The angel laughter spreads her broadest wings,
By land and sea where'er St. George's cross
And the starred banner in the breezes toss,
The merry music of his wholesome mirth
Sends rippling smiles around our English earth.

“Not mine,” Minerva cried, “to spoil thy joy—
Divide the honors, let us share the boy.”

S. WEIR MITCHELL.

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